STB News

September 2003

LA Science 60th Edition: 'A Year-Long Marathon' and a Peak Experience

Nikki Cooper, editor of Los Alamos Science, says producing the 60th anniversary edition of the publication was a "year-long marathon"—but now that it is done, she and her staff members see it as a peak experience.

This publication will occupy a special place on many bookshelves as a document looking back at the Laboratory's famous past, describing its present efforts, and peering into its future. LA Science sent copies to 500 libraries and many scientific communities around the world.

As explained in Director Pete Nanos' preface, "The volume begins by taking us back to the Laboratory's first decade through Harris Mayer's personal reflection 'People of the Hill,' and then it turns the spotlight on our present and future national security missions. It gives presence to both older and younger staff, voice to fears and hopes, and welcome to the enthusiasm, dedication, and can-do spirit that continue to motivate this institution."

Cooper says that in keeping with a suggestion from the 60th Anniversary Executive Committee, everyone in the extended Laboratory workforce will receive a compact-disk copy of the book as a "Director's Office present to the staff." The massive Laboratory mailing of these CDs was scheduled Sept. 25.

In a Sept. 17 interview, Cooper and two members of her staff, Jay Schecker, a science writer, and Gloria Sharp, a designer, looked back on the massive effort that went into producing this edition. (Managing Editor Ileana Buican was in Europe, enjoying a well-earned vacation.)

Sharp usually returns to her home group, Information Management-1 (IM-1), at the close of each edition, but this time, she said, work began "on the heels of the last issue."

(Continued on Page 3)

STB Leader Allen Hartford

Hartford Briefs Employees

Science and Technology Base Programs (STB) Leader Allen Hartford briefed STB workers recently on Laboratory salary increases and on the work done at two leadership retreats.

In a division meeting held Sept. 15 at Canyon School, Hartford noted that the Laboratory must take salary-increase money from its regular budget. No extra money is provided by the Department of Energy for this purpose. The Laboratory has stated, however, that it must keep salaries competitive to attract and retain people, and this year, market conditions indicate that to do so, it must spend about $28.6 million on pay increases.

Hartford provided a table that showed that the fiscal year 2004 (FY04) Salary Increase Authorization allocation (SIA) for STB is as follows: 3.22% for technical staff members; 3.70% for technicians; 4.50% for

(Continued on Page 2)

Hartford (Cont'd from p.1)

administrative/exempt employees (SSMs and OS-7s); and 3.90% for administrative/nonexempt employees.

He made clear that employees should not assume that their increases—or even the average increase in their category at STB—will be equal to the percentage listed. Several factors will affect the individual salary increases that appear on paychecks Oct. 16.

Those factors will include the individual's overall relative contribution (ORC) score for the current review period (based on performance and job content and ranging from 1 to 5) and alignment within the individual's peer group.

Hartford said, "(Deputy Director for Science and Technology) Bill Press has decided to pass the increase straight on through."

In addition to the salary increase, there is an authorization of 0.5% for each job series for promotional increases throughout the year.

Hartford said he looks at the ORC scores and makes the initial allocations for Canyon. He then meets with team leaders and discusses the allocations, sometimes making changes.

During his talk at Canyon, he said, "I've met with most of the team leaders—not all of them." He said he had also met with Research Library leaders to discuss their needs. They have a slightly higher percentage SIA in the TSM and technician categories, he said, because of some alignment problems. In other respects, their SIAs are equal to those for people at Canyon School.

Team leaders will sit down with employees individually between Oct. 1 and Oct. 16 to discuss their salary adjustments.

The Retreats

Describing the recent division leaders' retreat, Hartford said that those attending spent three days at La Fonda in Santa Fe, working from 7:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. almost every day. "It was really grueling," he said.

The division leaders met after an earlier retreat for the Senior Executive Team (SET) produced a vision, a mission statement, draft core values, and 15 draft goals for the Laboratory. About 60 people attended the division leaders' retreat, holding breakout sessions. The core values were discussed and modified, but most of the time was spent working on the 15 goals, reworking the goal statements and adding strategies and objectives. One additional goal was also developed.

Fine-tuning of some of these strategic planning documents is still in progress, and much work remains on the development of strategies, performance objectives, and measures, but the two meetings took a long step toward the future.

The Laboratory's new vision is to be "the trusted, competitive scientific solution for today's and tomorrow's national security challenges."

Hartford said that Director Pete Nanos feels that it is extremely important for the Laboratory to be competitive. He feels, Hartford said, that "in many areas, we're too expensive."

The Laboratory's new mission statement says, "We develop and apply science and technology to ensure the safety and reliability of the U.S. nuclear deterrent; to reduce the threat of weapons of mass destruction, proliferation, and terrorism; and to solve national problems in defense, energy, environment, and infrastructure."

Hartford said that the mission is "very similar to what we had before," but he noted that it has a "strong defense focus."

The draft statement of core values speaks of "service to the nation; integrity and openness; passion for excellence and innovation; personal accountability; respect for others; and teamwork."

Hartford shared the 16 draft goals with those attending the division meeting at Canyon, but the goals are not yet ready for print because they are still being modified.

In the next six weeks, divisions must decide which goals apply directly to their organizations and must develop specific business plans related to those goals.

Hartford will meet with employees at the Research Library on Sept. 29.

And another retreat is scheduled Dec. 1 through 3.

Hartford said, "I really believe this director is going to make a lot of this happen." The division leaders "are really coming together," he added.

Security

Annette Archuleta, STB's operations security officer, also spoke briefly at the Canyon meeting. She reminded employees of the need to make sure they have taken required course No. 9369, "Initial Computer Security Training." She also reminded them that they must wear their badges; she said they should shred instead of discarding or recycling documents if they contain any material of a personal nature; and she advised against adding to and sending on long strings of message exchanges because there is a danger of inadvertently releasing sensitive information.

60th Edition (Cont'd from p.1)

She never went back to IM-1, staying, instead, in the office of Science and Technology Base Programs-Los Alamos Science (STB-LASCI), and diving immediately into work for the 60th-anniversary edition.

Cooper recalled that Mayer's article actually arrived in June 2002. "I was so touched by it that I immediately thought we should use it," she said. "He was a student of (Manhattan Project physicist) Edward Teller's…."

Schecker said, "Ileana edited that piece and really did a tremendous job." Mayer had originally written a much longer piece. Mayer and Buican worked long and hard on the necessary condensation.

Cooper noted that Mayer's article provides details that clarify the history of Teller's contribution to the hydrogen bomb.

Schecker commented, "There are many similar stories … people wanting to get their story correct and get their story out."

The contributors to the edition worked hard to give LA Science their best. "Some of the managers really did put themselves out for us," Cooper said, mentioning especially James Peery.

Cooper said her entire staff worked well together to get the edition out on time, putting in long hours and overtime. "They came through on time; they were very, very willing to work on their pieces. We enjoyed it. We had lunches in the office. People worked on the weekends," she said.

When the document went to the printer, Lithexcel in Albuquerque, the Laboratory didn't have to wait three months as it had on one earlier edition. Lupe Archuleta in the Laboratory Print Shop figured out "how to make it happen," Cooper said, and the publication was done just six weeks and a day after the staff delivered it.

Asked to look back and remember special moments, Sharp said, "We were such a team … We were working as one … We were just together."

Schecker said, "We had a complete article that went to the author the week before going to press. He looked at it and said, 'Oh. I have brand new data….' We got it in … in a matter of a couple of hours. We just *did* it."

Cooper recalled that near the end of the process, the staff added an important article on archival data. There were also major additions to computer articles in the last few weeks.

Sharp said that as the staff researched picture possibilities for the Mayer article, they tried to find shots that had rarely been seen before. She remembered that a photographer who found a print of an aerial shot of Los Alamos in the 1950s said, "That building was the hospital—and I was born in that hospital…."

Cooper spoke of a radiography article that includes "a huge amount of history." It starts with the Manhattan Project, she said. Some of the photos from the first research on implosion had to be declassified so that they could be used, she added. (See Figure 2 on page 80.)

Cooper was pleased that the book started with the Laboratory's history, built on the past, and looked ahead to the future. But, she commented, "We started a lot of things we were not able to include because of the lack of time." She hopes to use some of those ideas in the future—notably, an interview with Theoretical Division fluid dynamicist Frank Harlow.

"We really focused on missions," she said.

This edition "takes you a little more inside the weapons world," she added. It discusses the anxieties and worries of weapons scientists and their readiness to do their work. One source told her, "'We are being asked questions that no one has ever addressed before.'" That was "a poignant moment," she said.

STB-UC Continues Efforts toward Strong Collaborations

The team that Jim Porter heads—the Science and Technology Base Programs-University of California Coordination Team (STB-UC)—has three basic responsibilities: university collaborations, science and technology assessment, and postdoctoral employees.

These are interrelated subjects vital to the future of Los Alamos National Laboratory. Porter currently leads a team that includes five full-time people—Debbie Wilke, Mary Ann With, Yolanda Galvez, Shirley Baca, and Rebecca Gower.

But what happens to efforts toward university collaboration when, for the first time, the University of California (UC) is facing competition for the Laboratory management contract?

(Continued on Page 4)

Collaborations (Cont'd from p.3)

In a recent interview, Porter said that despite its shorthand name, STB-UC and its work involve collaborations with more than one university. The team's primary focus is on the UC campuses (nine branches plus UC-Merced, which will open soon), but Porter and his staff also nurture collaborations with New Mexico universities (primarily the University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, and, sometimes, New Mexico Highlands University, Eastern New Mexico University, and Western New Mexico University).

"Collaborations are important for a variety of reasons," Porter said. A new contractor might possibly downplay them, he said, "but I doubt that very seriously."

He explained that collaborations bring new ideas to the Laboratory. They make it possible to work with students, enhancing their educational opportunities and their chances to learn about work at the national laboratories, and, simultaneously, giving the Laboratory a chance to consider the students for future employment.

Collaborations allow Laboratory staff members to maintain ties to the academic community, working with students, teaching, and keeping up with the latest university research. As a result, collaborations are a "valuable retention tool."

And, because universities have unique facilities—just as the Laboratory does—collaborations allow both sides to benefit.

With the importance of collaborations in mind, STB-UC is thinking about how to handle them so that students will not be jeopardized no matter how the contract competition is resolved.

The goal right now is to "tread lightly" and aim for short-time collaborations. In recent discussions with UC-San Diego, for example, the Laboratory emphasized planning for two-year rather than five-year programs.

In addition, Porter said, "What we've been trying to do is find the areas where there is the most synergy for the institutions." Faculty-staff collaborations should always exist, he said, but it is important to identify areas of research of special interest to whole institutions.

Just how do collaborations arise? Porter used an example to explain the process.

Deputy Laboratory Director Bill Press and Porter recently visited UC-San Diego, taking with them six to eight ideas for research that the Laboratory might like to pursue with the university. They spent a day on campus, talking to faculty members, administrators, and deans. "We spent most of the day listening," Porter said. Then, at the end of the day, they met with the chancellor and vice chancellor, summarized what they had heard, and participated in a give-and-take discussion, narrowing the list to three subjects—about the number of collaborations that they like to have with each institution.

"We know there will be areas of individual collaboration outside" these major categories, Porter said, but both institutions will give special encouragement to researchers who might work in the specified areas.

Porter, a physicist, noted that STB-UC makes a point of involving people with other specialties so that the selection of research areas will never be dominated by the interests of any one person. Everett Springer, an environmental scientist, works part-time in STB-UC as well as working in Earth and Environmental Sciences. Dominic Chan, who designs accelerators, works in STB as well as in Nonproliferation and International Security.

In addition, Porter noted, the universities have strengths in the humanities and the social sciences that can be very useful to the Laboratory in a time when the needs of Homeland Security include the modeling of situations that involve human behavior.

Turning to STB-UC's other responsibilities, Porter said that collaboration and assessment of the Laboratory's science and technology performance (a task specified in the UC management contract) both relate "to the quality of the science and engineering we do." He added, "Students keep you on your toes, and the faculty bring in a nice, fresh perspective. That's very important for the Laboratory."

Some students involved in collaborations decide on postdoctoral positions after they graduate. They are, Porter noted, "an extremely valuable part of the workforce pipeline" at the Laboratory—especially those who have doctorates. In fact, he said, many of the technical staff members at the Laboratory who have doctorates have been, at some time in the past, Laboratory postdoctoral employees.

Collaborations, assessments, and postdoctoral employees, STB-UC's specialty areas, have major characteristics in common, and the most important of these is that all three subjects are related to the future vitality and success of the Laboratory.

STB, Sept. 25: Picnic, Picnic

Photos by Charmian Schaller And Joe Vigil

Friends, Food, Fun

Annette Archuleta did a lot of the organizing and served as the games coordinator for the picnic. Cynthia Bustos ran the desert contest.

The winners? Josefina Salazar won the prize for the best-*looking* dessert—a beautiful apple pie. Bustos won the prize for the best-*tasting* dessert—a delicious yellow cake. Two teams tied in the scavenger hunt: the team of Lucille Lucero and Rebecca Duran; and the team of Salazar and Marcella Cromeenes. Archuleta won the free-throw contest. And the Educational Program Office won the gunny-sack race.

And...

Photogs

"Smile for the camera."